

Gladstone, Bill. *A History of the Jewish Community of London Ontario: from the 1850s to the Present Day*. Toronto: Now and Then Books, 2011. 248 pp.

This work documents the Jewish community of London, Ontario from the 1850s to the present. The author, Bill Gladstone, is a columnist for the *Canadian Jewish News* as well as a publisher who operates Now and Then Books and author of several other works. This book was commissioned by Penny and Robert Rubinoff in 2009, in honour of their parents David and Rachel. David Rubinoff was a successful businessman who owned the Commonwealth Holiday Inn franchise as well as other real estate ventures. The couple lived in London from 1939 until 1985, raised their four children there and were active members of the community.

Much of the Jewish scholarly and community literature in the past has tended to focus on large cities like Toronto and Montreal. Hence, this study represents a departure from this trend, serving as the first published history of London's Jewish community. Similar studies have been produced for Ottawa and Windsor within the last few years, written by Valerie Knowles and Rabbi Jonathan Plaut respectively.

Gladstone relies on a variety of sources that include: archival records from libraries, Jewish archives and the local London synagogue Or Shalom, photographs, approximately 100 oral histories that he undertook himself, genealogical sources and cemetery data gleaned from London's two Jewish cemeteries. This handsome book includes a large number of striking illustrations in the form of archival photographs, maps and documents. The work is structured in a manner that is chronologically and thematically driven, highlighting many family stories and historical lists and tidbits which are interspersed throughout the book.

When comparing London to other Jewish communities in Ontario, it would be considered a mid-sized community with a population base of 1880 in 2001. It was home to a large and

successful merchant class of Jews as well as one of Canada's most prestigious universities, the University of Western Ontario. The community was settled early on by a number of fascinating, colourful, and in some cases, famous figures like movie mogul Jack Warner, whose parents (the original family name was Wonsul) lived in London during Jack's early youth, Anglican Bishop Isaac Hellmut, a former Rabbi who converted and was the founder and first Chancellor of the University of Western Ontario, along with a number of bootleggers, bigamists, scam artists and other questionable characters, the latter of whom ran into some trouble with the law and did not remain in town very long.

The first Jewish settlers to establish roots in London arrived after 1869 and established businesses. Most of these residents were engaged in trades such as dry goods, cigar making, dress making, pawn broking and the junk and rag business. When investigating the immigration trends, Gladstone attributes family ties, jobs, connections to nearby towns or luck as the primary factors drawing early Jewish settlers to this area. A small number farmed outside of the city, but many of those ventures were short lived, due to the lure of appealing jobs and a strong Jewish infrastructure that existed within the larger city.

London, Gladstone reveals, had a sizeable Jewish infrastructure considering the size of its population. It had 3 synagogues by 1940, at least one kosher butcher, a community centre, a Jewish Council established in 1933, a branch of JIAS and a Talmud Torah. Gladstone also reveals that London had a thriving Yiddish theatre supported by Melech Grafstein, many Zionist organizations, and an active radical group of Jews who sponsored a visit by the prominent anarchist, Emma Goldman, in 1908 and took part in the local Workmen's Circle. He also recounts a story of how a number of radical residents joined a commune in the western United States for a number of years and returned around 1910. Although the chapter on radicals distinguishes London from many of the other mid-sized Jewish Ontario communities, despite alluding to the fact that Jews likely worked as factory operatives within the city's cigar and

garment industries during the first half of the twentieth century, one doesn't really learn about the size and scope of the Jewish working-class within this town or hear their unique stories. Thus, some detail about the less prominent and affluent Jewish citizens in town would have made this community history more complete.

One of the problems that the community—along with many others in Ontario -- is confronting today is the loss of its young people to Toronto and other large cities. This trend started in the 1950s as the youth left town in pursuit of a university education and employment opportunities. Gladstone reveals that London's Jewish population, like that of many others across the province, is aging, and there is a concern that it may be difficult to maintain the synagogues in the future without the support of younger generations. Despite this loss, London is quite unique in that it possesses an eruv, a mikvah, the availability of Kosher food at the local grocery stores, its own community newspaper as well as a JCC, a Federation, a day school, and a senior's centre. There is also an active Chabad movement close to campus that has attracted hundreds of students to its Shabbat dinners each week. Hence, the community's numbers are declining and yet it still seems to be sustaining its institutions and thriving.

Gladstone must also be commended for bringing together a wide array of sources that would not have been accessible to the public without his efforts. He does a wonderful job showcasing a plethora of stories documenting the prominent Jews who shaped the vibrant Jewish community of London over the past 160 years. The only critique that is worth noting, beyond the absence of working-class actors, is that the structure, although sound, becomes a little disjointed and choppy due to the way that the family biographies and documents are interspersed throughout this book. In turn, this community study tends to focus on the Jews of London almost exclusively and in isolation, leaving out their connections with non-Jews (except for descriptions of anti-Semitic incidents) as well as their brethren from other cities

like Toronto and Windsor. Since no group lives in a bubble, it would have been worthwhile learning more about these types of interactions and connections in order to get a more complete snapshot of their experiences. This work does, however, fill a major gap within the literature by revealing the untold stories of London's Jews, and one can hope that in the future more studies of this kind, documenting the histories of other significant communities in Ontario like Hamilton, Kitchener-Waterloo, St. Catharines and others, will be told.

Ellen Scheinberg

Goodman, Joseph J. *Collected Writings*. Hannah Berliner Fischthal, translator. Harriet Goodman Hoffman, editor. Bloomington, Indiana: Xlibris Corporation, 2011. 337 pp.

In 1919, Joseph J. Goodman's *Gezamelte Shriften* was published in Winnipeg. Eighty-five years later, Goodman's grandniece discovered his book at the Yiddish Book Center in Amherst, Massachusetts, a discovery which led to its translation into English along with the addition by his granddaughters of background material and commentaries, and ultimately to the publication of *Collected Writings*.

Now in bilingual format, *Gezamelte Shriften* is a compilation of Goodman's poems, essays, stories, homilies, and observations on a wide range of topics. Goodman was a committed Jew and Zionist, a romantic and a humourist, a philosopher and an astute observer of people and places—these qualities permeate his writings, providing us with a sense of the life lived by Jews in the early twentieth century in Western Canada.

Born in Ukraine, in the Pale of Settlement, in or around 1863, Goodman saw the Jews' suffering and poverty, and it is likely that he lived through several pogroms while in his teens. The horrific conditions that he both witnessed and endured seem to have shaped his world view and informed much of his writings.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, he emigrated to the United States and in 1901 moved to Canada, taking up